

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 FREETO 00583 251509Z

44

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-02

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PRS-01 DODE-00 OMB-01 IO-10

SAJ-01 /060 W

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P 251428Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 932

INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L FREETOWN 0583

FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SL, KS, KN

SUBJECT: SL-ROK RELATIONS: CONVERSATION WITH ROK AMBASSADOR-
DESIGNATE LEE

1. ROK AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE LEE VISITED ME AT HOME
MARCH 24 TO INFORM ME OF CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING
POSTPONEMENT PRESENTATION CREDENTIALS, REQUEST ACCOUNT
MY CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT, AND OBTAIN MY VIEWS
CURRENT SITUATION. LEE'S ACCOUNT OF SEQUENCE OF EVENTS
VIRTUALLY IDENTICAL TO THAT SET OUT BY STEVENS IN MY
CONVERSATION WITH HIM (REFTEL). LEE LEARNED OF EVENTS
FROM G.

L.V. WILLIAMS, SECRETARY TO THE PRESIDENT, WHO
ALSO APPARENTLY RECOMMENDED, AFTER MY MEETING WITH
STEVENS, THAT LEE CONTACT ME.

2. LEE TOOK CONSIDERABLY MORE ALARMIST VIEW OF DEGREE
NK INFLUENCE IN LOCAL POWER CIRCLES THAN APPEARS TO
ME WARRANTED, APPARENTLY BELIEVING NK IN POSITION
VIRTUALLY TO DICTATE TO APC CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND
GOSL WHAT TO DO AND, THROUGH INFLUENCE WITH CENTRAL
COMMITTEE MEMBERS, CLOSE TO BEING ABLE TAKE OVER GOSL
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 FREETO 00583 251509Z

AND INSTALL LEADERSHIP OF ITS CHOICE AND UNDER ITS

FULL DIRECTION. LEE ALSO SEEMED QUITE CONCERNED ABOUT PRC HAND IN RECENT EVENTS. LEE, HOWEVER, HAD POINTED OUT TO G.L.V. WILLIAMS THAT, THROUGH INVESTMENT IN FISHERIES VENTURE HERE, SOUTH KOREANS ALREADY PROVIDING INPUT INTO PRODUCTIVE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY OF ABOUT \$1 MILLION ANNUALLY, AND APPARENTLY, ALTHOUGH THIS NOT FULLY CLEAR, INDICATED PROSPECTS OF ROK COOPERATION IN OTHER ECONOMICALLY PRODUCTIVE PROJECTS OR INVESTMENTS BRIGHT. IN CONCLUSION, LEE, STATING HE UNDER IMPRESSION THAT TREND RUNNING AGAINST ROK, RAISED WITH ME POSSIBILITY OF MY CARRYING MESSAGE BACK TO STEVENS, THAT PROSPECTS ROK CONTRIBUTION TO SL DEVELOPMENT WERE GOOD.

3. I GAVE LEE GENERAL ACCOUNT MY CONVERSATION WITH STEVENS, NOTING THAT STEVENS CLEARLY FACED DILEMMA BUT THAT DILEMMA APPEARS MORE CLOSELY RELATED TO INTERNAL STRESSES AND POSSIBLE DIVISIONS WITH IN SIERRA LEONE THAN TO SPECIFIC ISSUE OF RESIDENT ROK REPRESENTATION. I TOLD LEE, WHICH HE WAS SURPRISED AND RELIEVED TO HEAR, THAT PRESIDENT HAD IN COMPLETELY UNAMBIGUOUS TERMS REAFFIRMED COMMITMENT TO RECEIVE RESIDENT ROK AMBASSADOR AND HAD SPECIFICALLY STATED ROK'S FREE TO MOVE AROUND TOWN AND ARRANGE OFFICE SPACE AND RESIDENCES WHILE HE SORTED OUT INTERNAL GOSL AND APC PROBLEM. I STATED PRESIDENT APPEARED FULLY SINCERE IN HIS COMMITMENT BUT OBVIOUSLY NEEDED TIME TO WORK OUT HOW TO RESOLVE HIS DOMESTIC CONFLICT. SINCE STEVENS' STYLE WITHIN PARTY AND WITH CABINET MINISTERS IS MORE TO BE A CONCILIATOR THAN A DICTATOR, THIS MIGHT TAKE SOME TIME, BUT STEVENS HAD FIRMLY REITERATED COMMITMENT TO ROK RATHER THAN TAKING CLEAR OPPORTUNITY AVAILABLE TO HIM TO FUDGE ISSUE IN TERMS OF A NEED TO RECONSIDER MATTER.

4. I TOLD LEE THAT I WAS INCLINED DISAGREE WITH HIS BELIEF THAT NK IN VIRTUAL POSITION TAKE OVER GOSL AND THAT TREND RUNNING AGAINST ROK. WHILE NK'S CLEARLY HAD DEVELOPED (PROBABLY BASICALLY THROUGH MONEY) STRONG CONTACTS WITH SOME CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND CABINET MINISTERS, DEEPEST IDENTIFICATION AMONG CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 FREETO 00583 251509Z

SIERRA LEONEANS IS AS NATIONALISTS AND SUPPORTERS OF INDEPENDENCE ALL AFRICANS FROM EXTERNAL DOMINATION. WHILE SOME COULD PERHAPS BE BOUGHT, MOST WOULD BE DEVOTED TO MAINTAINING MAXIMUM SL INDEPENDENCE FROM ANY OUTSIDE INFLUENCE. I SAID (AND LEE CONCURRED HE HAD ALSO SEEN EXAMPLES) THAT NK ARROGANCE AND HEAVY-HANDED TACTICS APPEARED NOT BE GOING DOWN WELL AND COULD REBOUND AGAINST THEM. I SAID THAT I THOUGHT SITUATION

CALLED FOR PATIENCE AND LETTING STEVENS WORK OUT HIS OWN SOLUTION TO PROBLEM, THAT STEVENS STILL THE DOMINANT FIGURE IN SL, AND THAT CONTINUATION OF FRIENDLY, SYMPATHETIC, LOW-KEY STYLE LEE HAS ADOPTED IN LOCAL CONTACTS TO DATE (HIS DESCRIPTION OF THESE SEEMED TO ME TO HIT JUST THE RIGHT NOTE AND, ASIDE FROM HIS ESTIMATE OF DEGREE NK INFLUENCE, HIS JUDGMENTS AND SENSITIVITIES STRIKE ME AS EXCELLENT) WOULD BE NOTED IN CONTRAST TO NK STANCE AND WORK TO ROK ADVANTAGE. I SAID THAT I THOUGHT IN FACT TIME FAVORED THE ROK. I TOLD LEE OF STEVENS' STATEMENT THAT ALL SL WANTED WAS THE FREETOWN TOWN HALL, AND SUGGESTED HE KEEP WILLIAMS FULLY INFORMED OF HIS ACTIONS, NOTING ANYTHING TOLD TO WILLIAMS WOULD GET THROUGH TO PRESIDENT.

5. LEE FELT THERE WAS POSSIBILITY HE MIGHT BE ORDERED LEAVE FREETOWN BY ROKG. I SAID I THOUGHT THAT WOULD BE UNWISE AND SUGGESTED HE NOT EVEN HINT AT POSSIBILITY TO GOSL.

6. LEE APPEARED MUCH RELIEVED BY MY REMARKS AND DID NOT RAISE AGAIN QUESTION OF MY SEEING STEVENS ON HIS BEHALF, WHICH I HAD INDICATED I THOUGHT WOULD BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE.
SAMUELS

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NNN

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